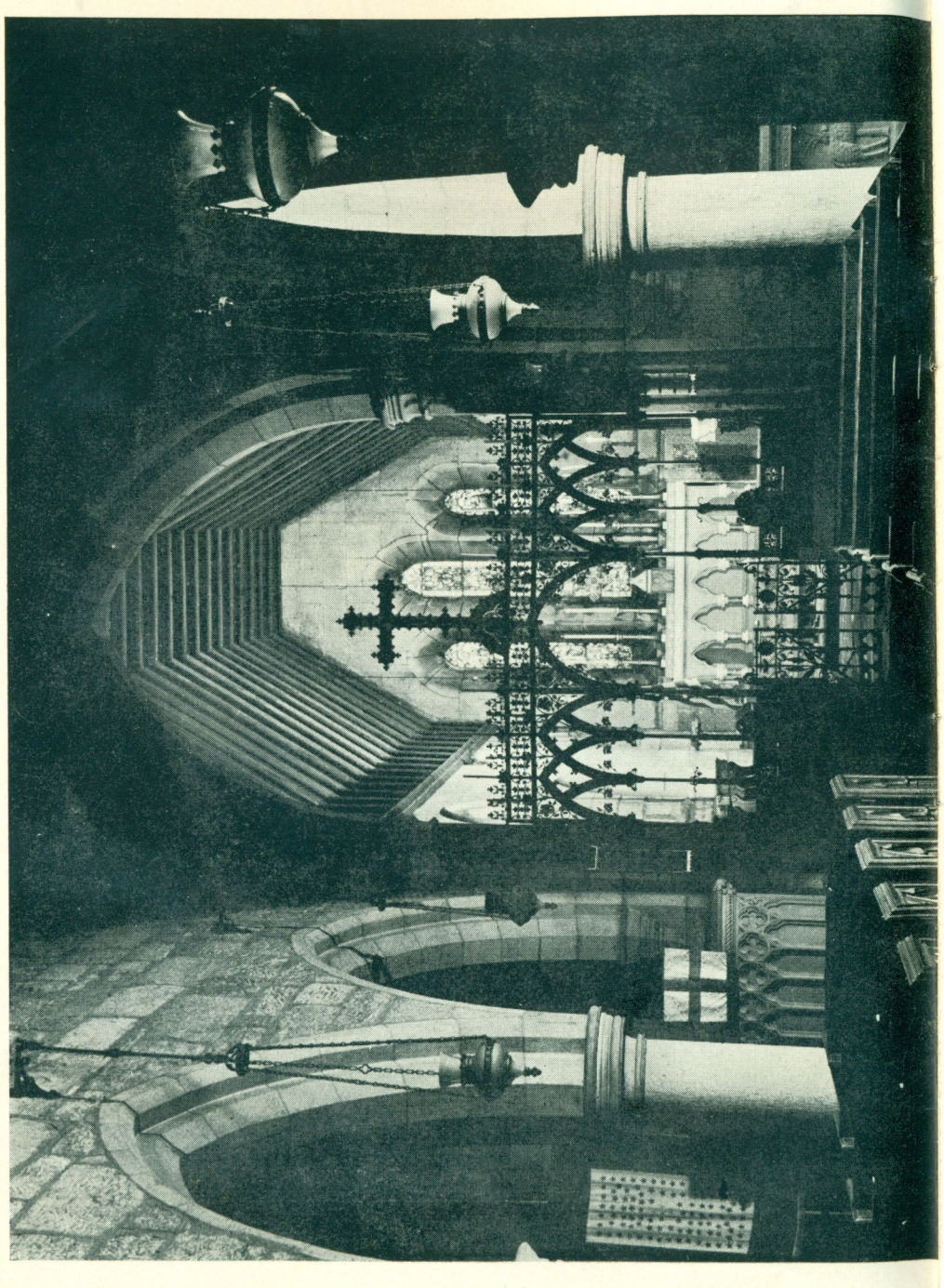
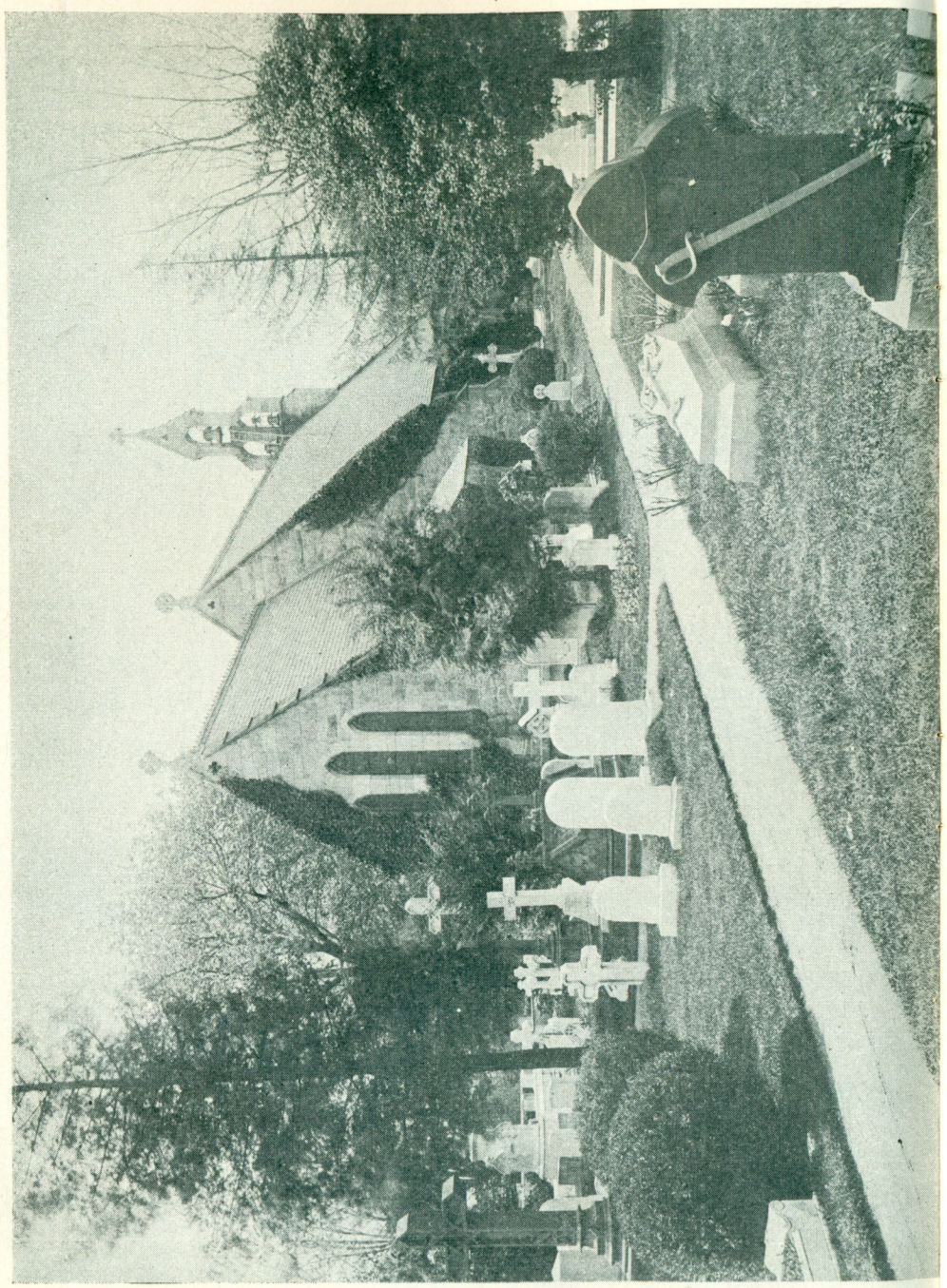
LET US GIVE THANKS UNTO OUR LORD GOD



LET US GIVE THANKS UNTO OUR LORD GOD

An Act of Thanksgiving on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Church of St. James the Less, Philadelphia

1946



A LITANY OF GRATITUDE

O Father of all, who art Wisdom and Beauty and Goodness, whose Spirit ever strives in the souls of men; we thank Thee that Thou hast made us, given us life and love for Thee, and the desire to pray.

Thanks be to Thee, O Lord.

For the gift of Thyself, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; for Thy divine compassion which careth for us despite our weaknesses, cowardice, and self-love.

Glory be to Thee, O Lord.

That we are by Baptism Thy children, members of Thy Son and called to share the joy of service in Thy Kingdom.

We thank Thee, Lord most generous and kind.

That Thou hast said over bread and wine, "This is my Body, This is my Blood," and givest us Thyself in Holy Communion, the eternal pledge of Thy love.

Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

Because through suffering and weakness Thou hast taught us patience and given us the sense of dependence upon Thee; and because in sorrow Thou hast revealed to us the glory of others' kindness.

Blessed be Thy Holy Name, O Lord.

For the laughter of children; for pure mirth and kindly wit; for the jest of gallant souls and the cheerfulness of sufferers.

Blessed be God in the hearts of His people.

For the gift of forgiveness for all sins, which Thou bringest to all who come to Thee in sorrow and repentence; for the Holy Dead who watch over us and pray, for Thy Church on earth, for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and for Eternal Life.

Praise be to Thee, O Lord, King of Eternal Glory.

The Bishop's Office

The Diocese of Pennsylvania

Church House
202 South Nineteenth St.
Philadelphia 3.

February 25, 1946

To the Congregation of the Church of
St. James the Less

My heartiest congratulations and best wishes to you on your anniversary celebration. You will naturally want to record certain definite steps in the history of your parish and I know that you will do it with a realization that the real history of the parish can never be written. That history lies hidden in the heart of God. It would concern all those who brought their children to the church to be baptized; those who have come for the sacraments of the church; and those who have come to confess their sins and worship. I pray for God's continued blessing on your fine parish.

Sincerely yours,

Bishop of Pennsylvania

A WORD OF EXPLANATION

THE following pages are taken from some of the letters written on the one hundredth anniversary of St. James the Less. They reveal the rich and varied life which comes from the hearts of people. Not every one could find words to express the things they were grateful for. And even those who did write said again and again how hard it is to tell the secret things of the heart. But all of us can find in these words something that helps us to express our gratitude to God, and thus make the book our own act of thanksgiving.

The joy of heaven will be to see God. In the light of His perfect love, we will be able to look back and see all the marvelous mercy and loving kindness with which He dealt with us in this world. In sharing our thanksgiving at this time, we can have a real foretaste of what that joy of heaven will be like.

It was on April 30th, 1846, that the first vestry meeting of the Church was held at the home of Robert Ralston. Steps were taken at that time to organize the Parish and to erect the Church building. The next day, May 1st, was the feast of St. Philip and St. James. We call him "the Less" because there were two Apostles named James; James the brother of John, and the James who later wrote the Epistle and was the first Bishop of Jerusalem. The latter is called "the Less" because he was a smaller man than the other James.

The corner-stone of the present building was laid on the feast of St. Simon and St. Jude, October 28th, 1846. The building was made almost exactly like St. Michael's Parish Church, in the village of Long Stanton, England. St. Michael's was built in 1230 A. D. Thus our Church building is a visible link of the continuity of our faith with the past. Its history in a real sense goes back to Christ Himself, because it is still the "faith once delivered to the Saints" that is to be found at St. James the Less. As in the early Church, it is the Holy Eucharist that forms the center of the life and worship of the Parish. We form one cell in the Body of Christ, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church which our Lord founded.

As for the future, St. James the Less will go on as a place where Christians will come together to worship God, and to enjoy communion with our Lord Jesus Christ. May those who come be knit together as one family among the children of God. And may the bells in the Church ring out to all who will hear those words of our Saviour, "Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."

PAUL C. WEED, JR.

From Letters Written on the 100th Anniversary of St. James the Less

One of the things which especially appeals to me in connection with Saint James the Less is the lovely, quiet and peaceful "God's Acre," the little graveyard blessed by the Church. Some of my dear ones lie there and it always seems a happy privilege to visit both the Church and the graves.

Although not of the Parish of St. James the Less no one could feel more closely associated than I; too deeply, I am afraid, to express my feeling in words. I wish all the best in this hundredth anniversary of the Church and Churchyard so near and dear to my heart.

Of course I will make my Communion for the Parish and in deep thankfulness for the blessings I receive there.

In my mind, and I am positive it will always remain, is the fact I was once an altar boy serving Father Dan Wood and also Father Harriman. I can safely say I never did anything that pleased me as much as this duty to God and St. James the Less.

Another picture placed in my mind is my comfirmation by Bishop Rhinelander. To me he always seemed like the old man of the Church (please pardon the slang). He always made you feel at home. He was kind, thoughtful and understanding.

Last, but not least, and above all unforgettable is Father Ritchie, the same type as Bishop Rhinelander.

My mother lived as a girl in Germantown and she and her sisters used to walk "across the fields" to the Church of St. James the Less, where she taught in the Sunday School. She left Germantown on her marriage.

About fifty years ago I was visiting my aunts in Germantown and we went (by trolley) to see the Church and the Churchyard. I said then that this was where I would like to be buried, but with no thought that it might ever come to pass. Yet, twenty-three years ago, when my mother died, we bought a lot there.

To me that Churchyard is the embodiment of peace and beauty, and the Wanamaker bell takes away all thought of loneliness. Always I remember how it looked on Easter morning.

And the Church is a gem. I have been in it only twice, once to a service. I live in New York and do not often get to Philadelphia, but I feel very much as if I belonged to St. James the Less.

I would like to say St. James the Less has always been very near and dear to my heart; for my father John Cooke was a close friend of Mr. Robert Ralston, and gave generously to the funds for the Church building; and because of this was given a lot in the Churchyard, so I have no deed to our lot but it is on record in the books of the Parish. My father also gave the bells in the little belfry tower on the Church. I was at the 50th anniversary service when Bishop Coleman of Delaware preached the sermon. They sang the St. Cecilia Mass. Robert Williams, afterward Rector of Trinity Church, Princeton, served at the Mass that day.

Many years ago when St. James the Less was a country Church surrounded by field and quiet in the country, old Philadelphia friends of mine, who lived in the city, have

described to me how frequently on a Sunday in spring and summer they would take a horse car to some entrance of the Park and then walk to a little steamboat running from the oldest boathouse on the Schuylkill River. They would land at the foot of a rough, steep hill, now called Nicetown Lane. The walking was rough, but this was a whole day occasion. They had brought their lunch and after Morning Service at St. James the Less they would relax and sit around in the fields having a picnic. Other friends from Germantown, after a three o'clock Sunday School in Germantown, used to meet for a walk to St. James the Less, or to St. Timothy's, Roxborough, for Evensong, and the walk seemed nothing to them. This was, of course, before the coming of automobiles which have taught many of us to forget how to walk.

St. James the Less still stands now surrounded by City streets. It is a beautiful little Church and any one visting it either at Easter time, Memorial Day or Christmas, would find the beautiful flowers or Christmas greens on all the graves, feel, indeed, that it is "God's Acre." There are now two sets of bells that ring many times, calling people to Church.

St. James the Less has always seemed to me the ideal little Church, but I never appreciated her so much until I had the chance to apply the old saying "absence makes the heart grow fonder."

During the war, for almost two years, I had the opportunity to travel with my husband to the various army camps in different cities. Throughout that time we were guests in many different Churches, some Episcopal, some Methodist, and some Baptist. And though some of these were vastly different as to service, it was an interesting and enlightening experience and we enjoyed every bit of it. But quite often we would get a tinge of homesickness for our own St. James

the Less, and we began to realize how very much she meant to us.

It was like coming home then the first time we stepped into our own little Church again. None is so beautiful nor so sacred in all the world in our eyes and we are so thankful for that. We hope and pray she may always continue to be our "Church Home."

I have always admired St. James the Less, as all my family in this country are buried there in the vault of my grandfather, the Reverend William Prescod Hinds, a clergyman of the Church of England, ordained by Archbishop Howley, while Bishop of London. He was never naturalized, as he thought it not consistent with his ordination vows.

I always think of St. James the Less as one of the loveliest of Churchyards. With every best wish for a happy and "thankful" observance of the 100th anniversary.

Ten years younger than the Parish of St. James the Less, St. Timothy's Parish, Roxborough, nearly parallels in years the span of our neighbor in "the Falls." Edward and Robert Ritchie were friends of Father Dennison the elder and his son, Father Herbert Dennison. Straight through the years our life has been strengthened in the Holy Catholic Faith by the strong witness to the Faith at St. James the Less. Our early Parish leaders include members of the same families, particularly the Wagner family. In recent years St. Timothy shared with St. James the Less the saintly Father Gorgas, dear to more penitents than any Confessor you could possibly name.

These are some of the memories that make me thankful for

St. James the Less. I can remember old Mr. Watson, who was Rector before Dr. Ritchie came. He and his wife lived in the lovely old rectory. His wife was a tall, well-built woman and they had one daughter, Mary.

Down below where the Wanamaker Tower is now, there was an old winding road where the little old school house was. There were sheds nearby where they used to put the horses. It was here that my sisters and I went to school. There were rows of tall cedar trees and boxwood bushes going up to the Church.

At that time there wasn't a house between the Church and the railway station, Belview, later called Past Time Park. On Thursday night Miss Beerhalter came up from the station for choir practice, and the Rector used to scold her, "Ella, why do you insist on getting off in all that yellow mud?" On one occasion the Rector's wife said to her, "Ella Beerhalter, did you have any dinner tonight?" "Why I don't believe I did, Mrs. Ritchie. Oh, yes, I had two bananas." She was an original. Dr. Stoker was the first one to bring her out, and I remember the first Sunday he stood behind her coaching her. She was afraid. She was just a girl.

I used to teach Sunday School until I got a group of three boys who would pull each other's hair and punch each other. Then I had to give it up. The only schooling I had was in the old school. We would take our own lunches, and at twelve o'clock we had twenty minutes to go out and eat. I can still see Miss Mary Cannon, our teacher, ringing the bell out of the window when the twenty minutes were up. She taught for fifty years. The Reverend Robert Ritchie spoke wonderfully of her the Sunday after her funeral.

On our 50th anniversary, the Bishop of Delaware spoke. He gave us as our text a verse from the 125th Psalm, "The hills stand about Jerusalem; even so standeth the Lord round about his people, from this time forth for evermore." He spoke of the steadfastness of the mountains as compared

with the ocean. The ocean is always changing and can be cruel. But God is steadfast and He is always kind.

We used to go to Church on every Saints day at 9 o'clock. On Fridays we always went to Church at 9. There was just Morning Prayer. When they had the Communion Service we weren't allowed to stay. Every Friday the Rector would come in for fifteen minutes of Catechism. When the Church was renovated thirty-five years ago, they had the services over in the school. We used to have lovely old banners. Each class had a name. Ours was St. Luke. Those with the highest marks for the week were allowed to carry the banner, when we came in procession outside and walked over to Church. Later the banners were hung in the Church. We had fifteen classes in the old school room.

On Christmas, long ago, they would send us upstairs, and serve us a mug of coffee and a dutch cake. Then we would come down and they would give us gifts, candy done up in tarlatan, and an orange. It was a good time for us.

Bishop Stevens confirmed me in 1885. The Reverend Robert Ritchie presented me. The Bishop's address was on "all run the race, but one receives the prize." He said there was no reason why we shouldn't all receive prizes, if we run faithfully.

I remember one morning at Communion, Reverend Robert Ritchie was coming down from the altar with the chalice. He was all alone, as he never wanted any help at the altar. He had on the white vestments, and the light was coming through the windows. It was just beautiful, a picture I will never forget. I think I came nearer to heaven then than I ever did in all my life.

When the new ground was consecrated for the Churchyard, they had the prayers in Church. Miss Beerhalter's father got a cornetist, and he lead the procession all around the lower part of the Churchyard. Sister Naomi, Miss Beer-

halter's cousin, used to come to visit her for a month every year. She was a very humorous person and very lovely.

I remember as a stranger seeing St. James the Less for the first time, coming on it unexpectedly, how it impressed me in its lovely setting of serenity and beauty, bathed in the mellow, soft light of an autumn afternoon. This impression I have never lost when, since that time, I have had occasion, through living in another town, to come for Communion and Confession. I love in entering the Church to think of all who have prayed there in years gone by. They, too, must have experienced that "Sursum Corda," that deep sense of the nearness of God, bringing as it does a taste of the peace which the world cannot give, that one feels like a greeting, in opening the door. Most truly am I grateful for the devout and reverent celebration of the Mass, the Mass that for 100 years has been offered in praise and thanksgiving to God before those beautiful altars; for the tabernacle with the lamp burning before it, continually reminding us that in spite of the uncertainty of human affairs, therein resides the great God of heaven and earth, the sovereign Lord and Saviour of mankind, always ready to receive our prayers, always ready to help those who are in need. The atmosphere, both in the Church and in the Churchyard, recalls vividly that early Bishop Thomas Ken (his writings must have been well known to those first parishioners), especially those parts of his belief:

> "I believe, O Blessed and adorable Saviour, that the Church is a society of persons, founded by Thy love to sinners, united into one Body, of which Thou art the Head, initiated by baptism, nourished by the Eucharist, governed by pastors commissioned by Thee, and endowed with the power of the keys, professing the doctrine taught by Thee and delivered to the saints, and devoted to praise and to love of Thee. And I believe, O most holy Jesus, that Thy saints here below have communion with Thy

saints above, they praying for us in heaven, we here on earth celebrating their memorials, rejoicing at their bliss, giving Thee thanks for their labours of love, and imitating their examples; for which, all love, all glory, be to Thee for time and for eternity."

For all this I give thanks to God for the hundred years of praise, beauty and service that have been offered Him under the patronage of your holy Saint.

I have quite a few things to be thankful to God for knowing St. James the Less Church. Fr. Harriman was very kind to me sixteen years ago when I was very ill. And I am thankful for the many good friends and especially for one who has been most wonderful and loyal to me. I love to come to the Church on Sunday mornings early before the 9 o'clock Mass. I just feel so at peace and that God really is there. These are just a few of the things.

I find the work of the Altar Guild most interesting. I never knew the linens had to be folded a certain way or that each piece of linen had a name and was used for only one purpose. I was surprised to learn that no soap was used in the washing of the Chalice and the Paten, and only the Chalice Cloth was used to dry them. On close examination, I found all the altar linens were sewed by hand and made of very fine linen.

Each Wednesday since October, the children attend Catechism in St. Joseph's Chapel. Four o'clock hot cocoa and cookies are served in the Parish House. It is wonderful to watch a group of children get together, with young bodies, sound minds and healthy appetites. Everyone seems to enjoy themselves. At 4:15 all go to St. Joseph's Chapel where they join in hymn singing and the clergy teach the answers and ask questions and tell interesting stories. After Catechism,

those who can stay go to the basketball court where the boys play at one end and the girls at the other until 5:30. During Lent we noticed a larger attendance and hope by Easter when Catechism closes with the children's Mission, all the children of the Parish will be present.

Since this is the one hundredth anniversary of the Church, I am writing about serving on the altar. I have found this work very interesting work. The first time I served daily Mass I was nervous. The more I served the better I liked it and gradually improved. Since my first service I have served for seven different priests, a funeral service, Candlemas Service, a morning Mass, and the Sunday Mass. It has been nearly a year since my first time on the altar. Up at camp a few weak points were cleared up and I served seven times at Camp. Since that time I served almost every Sunday. I am thankful for this reason and many others that I go to Church of St. James the Less. I sincerely wish that on the two hundredth anniversary and every other anniversary there are other people who will be thankful for the same reason as I.

I am thankful to God for being a member of St. James the Less, both in Rev. Robert and Rev. Edward Ritchie's time, both good Christian men.

Standing amid the peace of its Churchyard, I am thankful to God for St. James the Less as a house of prayer, where one can slip away from the rush and turmoil of an unlovely world and say one's prayers before its altar lit only by the glow of its sanctuary light.

For many years my father was a Vestryman of St. James the Less, and as a child I loved to attend service there. In the early 1900's we purchased a lot where both my parents now lie. The Reverend Robert Ritchie we knew very well.

He died the same day as my mother. God bless St. James the Less for the work it is doing, and for the peace it brings to countless hearts.

The most wonderful thing that happened to me in the Church of St. James the Less was to be the only and last man to have a blessing from the late Father Ritchie at Evening Prayer. The same night he passed on to eternal rest. I always feel when I go on the altar he is present.

My earliest memory of St. James the Less dates from nearly sixty years ago when it was a favorite Sunday afternoon walk over the fields of that time across the brook to the friendly five o'clock service and Father Ritchie's warm welcome at the door. Since that time, with my family at rest in the Churchyard, my interest has grown deeper and I like to keep in touch with Parish activities even if I cannot get there very often.

St. James the Less has always been to me a sacred and loved memory. In my early childhood upon being taken to the Church I remember a large yellow mansion on the opposite side of Nicetown Lane and of interest to me as my Grandmother used to spend her vacations there with her great uncles, the Ralstons, she having been sent to school in Philadelphia from the West Indies. Upon the death of a small sister, my Father bought a lot there, the deed of which I hold. My father was deeply interested in the Church and its foundation following the going to England by the gentlemen who were commissioned to select a model for the Church and graveyard to surround it. Therefore, since the time Nicetown Lane was a path leading up a steep hill, I have followed it until my body and that of my sister will be carried to that same early burial lot, to await the coming of our Lord. There

have been so many additions to the grounds that I fancy there are few who remember the little country Church surrounded by fields of wild flowers or of Father Ritchie and his beautiful readings of the Prayer Book Services.

One of the great memories in connection with St. James the Less for me, and many others, was my asociation with Father Ritchie, one of the true saints of God. In him, through him, we could see God working; using him as an instrument for the betterment of mankind. What an inspiring example he was and is to us still on our earthly pilgrimage. I have known few finer priests and pastors than he. Even now I can see him walking along the street, carrying the Blessed Sacrament to some member of his flock, ever mindful of their need, never of his. May he rest in peace.

It is this association through my service at St. James the Less that I am thankful to God for. God has blessed St. James the Less with Father Ritchie and other devoted servants. I know He will bless it in the future, too.

It is indeed hard for me to enumerate the many blessings I have received as a result of my early training and education at St. James the Less Church.

One of my earliest memories was going to the old Parish House every Saturday afternoon along with a lot of young people, and studying Tours Mass in F with Miss Beerhalter, in preparation for us to sing with the Choir on Christmas morning, a blessing I recall every Christmas and thank God for the richness I feel it gave my soul.

When I think back now and reflect on how Miss Beerhalter gave her whole life to God and St. James the Less, and the many, many people whose lives she influenced to the Glory of God, I realize what a truly great character she was and

how her good influence reflects in the souls of many people I knew.

About Father Ritchie (who was my sponsor in baptism), it is impossible to write in such a short space. But I shall always hold dear the fond memory of his wonderful sermons. He used to preach in the little Mission on Indian Queen Lane, where he and the congregation were so close, and Father Ritchie so inspired, the tears used to pour from his eyes, and from the congregation, too. I cherish and preserve his last sermon as Rector, and feel honored to remember I once had the honor to walk this earth with him.

St. James the Less means a lot to me. I was confirmed while Father Ritchie was Pastor and my sons were christened by Father Ritchie and I feel that his blessings on them has helped to make them the fine men they are.

I found a lot of comfort in the services that marked the anniversary of my beloved husband's death, and St. James the Less will always be a Holy place for my husband is buried there and where I hope to be buried. When living in Philadelphia, I often sat in the graveyard with the kindest thoughts and prayers for us all.

And I am so glad that St. James the Less is doing so much for my granddaughter.

Now I will go back some years. When as a child, I used to look forward to our Fourth of July picnic with a tin cup tied around my neck and march to the woods holding on to the rope marching to the tune of the band. I can almost see Father Ritchie now looking so proud of us and helping some of the smaller ones along.

On days that are clear the sound of the chimes are very pleasing to anyone's ears. These bells alone are a landmark

along with the Church. I have had visitors tell me that the inside of our Church is something you won't forget in a long time. Also, our services that are sung instead of just said like other Churches. It is always pleasing to get back to your own Church.

I attended Sunday School at St. James the Less from the age of about 11 years and was confirmed by the Rt. Rev. Ozi. Whitaker, Bishop of Pennsylvania. Later, I was married there by the Rev. Robert Ritchie and some of our children were christened there. My wife was born in a house which stood where the rectory now stands, was christened and attended Sunday School and Church there. She was a teacher in the Sunday School. I was one of the altar servers for several years, both under the Rev. Robert Ritchie and also his brother, the Rev. Edward Ritchie. The Rev. Chas. J. Harriman came after that and we became very friendly, but owing to my moving to Germantown, I could not attend services there, but I have always had a feeling that it was my church home. We are members of St. Luke's Church, Germantown, at present. I hope to see St. James the Less grow bigger and better than ever.

I was standing at the West Cornwall Station waiting for the Saturday Special to arrive. I could hear the whistle of the train and suddenly my heart sank. I was frightened. Would they like me and would I like them? Three weeks was a long time to spend with strangers. Oh, if I could only run away. Why did I say that I would help out? Why didn't I go away on a vacation instead? All these thoughts ran quickly through my mind and then the train pulled into the station and I could not escape. A crowd of boys and girls scrambled off the train and then I felt a hand tucked into mine. I looked and the hand belonged to a girl about eleven years old and she grinned at me with a merry hello, and I grinned back and right then and there I knew I was going to like these

young people from St. James the Less. Why they were just like any other group of youngsters, friendly, full of life and anxious to learn all about Camp life. I felt at home.

I am thankful for St. James the Less for the summer camp, there all the boys and girls get together and really get to know each other better, we meet new friends and have fun. We all get to know God better, too.

The trolley stopped at 29th and Clearfield Streets on a summer evening many, many years ago and mother and I alighted and turned west on Clearfield Street towards the sunset and a new strange place named "St. James the Less" where mother was going to keep house for Father Edward Ritchie, the Rector. And so it was as a small child that I first saw the place that was to be my home spiritually and physically for many years, and the memories of the years spent there have been very precious and enduring. The old Rectory was part of a huge, sprawling, weather-stained stone building, the other part being the Parish House. We were later told that the building had formerly been a boys' school which probably accounted for the fact that upstairs in all the rooms, lockers were built into the walls and one small room had bars on the windows.

The library in which Father Ritchie spent most of his time while indoors, was lined with books from floor to ceiling for he was an inveterate reader and also did much writing which included some beautiful prose and poetry. Many of the poetical quotations which he made in his sermons were his original words though I doubt if this were generally known as Father Ritchie was a very shy and modest person. He was also a very humble and retiring person and a man who lived his every day life close to God and His precepts.

As I grew older in the Rectory I was to learn that he was in every sense of the word "father" to his Parish. No one was

ever turned away or his need questioned. Worthy or unworthy they were all treated in the way their various needs decided. Of the numerous tramps who made the Rectory a regular stopping place, one I can remember. After eating the food given him he asked the Rector for a pair of shoes. Father Ritchie went upstairs and returned with a very nice pair but they didn't suit the tramp, he wanted a pair just like those "your reverence has on." Without a question the shoes were removed and given him. Father Ritchie going upstairs in his stocking feet to hunt another pair. His faith and trust in human beings was often abused and taken advantage of but he never stopped for one moment giving of his possessions and what was more important, himself. Very frequently his charity was dispensed not from Church funds but from his own purse and I think it true that he spent nothing of his salary on himself, giving most of it away.

He was most meticulous about matters pertaining to the Church and Church ritual and he expected the same attitude from others. The telephone would ring at all hours of the night and no call was ever given grudging attention. The same particular care which he gave to Church details he gave to the most lowly person who called, phoned or wrote. He would rise, dress and leave the Rectory any time of the night to go from one part of the city to the other to make sick calls and on many of the street car lines he was personally known and beloved by the conductors and motormen. Sometimes he would forget and leave his hat or umbrella on a car, but they would be safely returned without inquiring for them. A great many people came to the Rectory who were not even members of the Episcopal Faith. Usually they had been turned down by their own ministers but they came knowing Father Ritchie would aid them and he did. I can recall only one year when he took a vacation and that one was forced upon him. He hated to be away from his Church and his people. His attitude was the same for all, rich and poor met the same man and received the same consideration.

In the many years which have passed since I lived there,

I have never forgotten our Christmas Eves at the Old Rectory. Towards midnight in the distance we would hear the faint strains of the old familiar carols coming closer and closer up Clearfield Street. We would heat the coffee in readiness and Father Ritchie would put on his overcoat, the music would grow louder until there on the front lawn in the deep and glistening snow the band from East Falls stood playing for the Rector the hymns he so loved. With bared head he would stand on the porch listening. After all were finished he would bless them. He then dispensed the hot coffee, gave each a gift and to the strain of "Should Auld Acquaintance Be Forgot" they would leave, trudging down the street, the notes of the music echoing back over the frosty air and then fading away into the silence until another year would come.

And so the years passed in the Old Rectory. The wheat field across the street had become a building lot and great plans were afoot for the new Parish House, Rectory and Sexton's house which were to arise there. We watched the buildings go slowly up, two of them, then it was decided to use the Sexton's new residence for the Rectory. We moved over when it was completed and saw with some sadness the Old Rectory, which had housed the Ritchie family for so many years, torn down. A few years later Father Ritchie was asked to resign because of his increasing years. It was the deepest wound of his life. Once again he made ready to move, this time into the small house at the corner of 32nd and Clearfield Streets, where he lived as Rector Emeritus, beloved and reverenced by all who knew him, until his death.

I do not know just how to express my feeling for St. James the Less. No other Church could ever take its place in some ways. When the greatest grief I ever had in my life came to me, I found sanctuary at St. James the Less. When I most needed spiritual help and comfort, and also material help and advice, I found it there, through Father Harriman. He never failed in any way, going far beyond his mere duties as

a priest, even giving his own blood to try and save my son's life. I can never be grateful enough to St. James the Less for what it has done for me, and which I am only able to repay with loyalty and affection and eternal gratitude.

I suppose I had better add that what I have just written brought me closer than I had ever been before to the all, enveloping love of God, and His infinite mercy, protection and watchfulness over the least of us. I realized as never before my need of Him. That is what St. James the Less means to me.

I like St. James because it's one of the oldest Churches in this part of Philadelphia. Camp is like a health camp. I like hiking very much.

Thirty years ago we belonged to a Reformed Church. We had a lovely girl who came to St. James the Less Sunday School, and young as she was, expressed a wish if she was to die she would like to be buried in the Churchyard. She loved it so much. We lost her very suddenly, and we fulfilled her wish.

The late Father Ritchie was very good to us, and as we belonged to the Church of England and had both been confirmed, we made St. James the Less our Church, for which I have often been thankful, as I love my Church and all it stands for. I have made many friends, and have had many happy hours there. I sincerely wish the best of everything for St. James the Less.

We are very thankful to our God that we know St. James the Less and have had it as our Church for a good many years and were married there by the late Rev. Robert Ritchie.

Our children were all baptized there by the late Rev. Edward Ritchie, then later confirmed there.

I remember well the day I was confirmed about 49 years ago. It was on a Saturday afternoon, when we girls came out of the Sunday School to walk over to Church, there were some horses and carriages in the drive. The horses got frightened and tried to run away, we got a little scared also, but all ended very well.

We shall always love St. James the Less. Then the Rev. C. J. Harriman came to be our Rector. We also loved and got along just fine. We always like to help in any way we could. I am just praying that I will soon be able to come to my Church again. Thanking God every day that He has been so good to me and my family.

The thing that I am most thankful for at St. James the Less is the great privilege which has and is being extended to me in allowing me to glorify and serve God at His Holy Altar.

O Lord God, I am thankful to Thee that day by day the Eucharist is celebrated at St. James the Less, for I believe this is the way Thou hast appointed to continue in time the saving benefits of Thy loving sacrifice on the Cross. I am grateful that day by day Thou abidest in the Church in this Blessed Sacrament of the altar. I am thankful for all those who come here because they love Thee, and want to pray to Thee. I am thankful for those who come to confess their sins and receive absolution, and thereby cause the angels in heaven to rejoice. And to Thee I am thankful for all the children and young people and old people who love this lovely Church of stone and colored glass which reminds us of heaven. And I cannot forget to give thanks for the vision of those who began the Church, the generosity of those who give for its support, and the kindly wisdom of those who watch out for its welfare. Accept, O Lord, this my act of thanksgiving through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As a student and in my early ministry, it was a real privilege to have known Father Ritchie, to have heard his clear and practical advice given, along with other champions of the faith of that day, at the meetings of the "C.C.", and the gracious kindliness extended to me as a young parson, when I took a burial service or assisted on other occasions at St. James. He seemed to give you the impression that you were doing him an honor to be present. For a half a century St. James the Less Church has stood out in my mind as a Parish where the fullness of the Faith was taught and practiced.

We at St. James the Less have a summer Camp for which the young people are very thankful. It is located in the Berkshire mountains in Connecticut. There is a very small town about a half a mile from the Boys' Camp and about a quarter of a mile from the girls' Camp. West Cornwall is a quaint place with only two stores and a railway station. The Camp is divided into two sections, the boys' camp and the girls' camp with the Housatonic River running by them. The Camp is set in a valley between two mountains.

Every morning except Sunday we go to Mass at 7:30, and every evening except Sunday we go to Evening Prayers at 5:30. On Sunday we go to Mass at nine, and have Evening Prayers and Adoration at 5:30. We start our day off by going to Chapel, which is a small stone building with a beautiful altar in it. The Chapel is shaped like the body of St. James. The boys and girls eat breakfast together after Chapel at the boys' Camp. Everybody at Camp has a definite job to do. The barns, which are used for recreation, the dormitories, the dining room, and the kitchen are to be swept. After everyone has finished their respective jobs, we have a sports program which consists of basketball, football, baseball and other games. We go swimming twice a day in the River. On Wednesday and Saturday nights we go to town. After town on Wednesday night we go for a short hike, and on Saturday night we have a dance in the barn. On the other nights after

supper, we have flashlight battles, bunco parties, stunts, or we sit around the camp fire and sing. About fifty or sixty young people go to Camp from our Church. Everybody at St. James the Less should be truly thankful to God for this wonderful place for us to go every summer.

I have a very tender and loving feeling about St. James the Less. The lovely little Church on the hill with its beautiful graveyard so beautifully kept, the Church Chimes pealing forth all round reminding one of the sacred spot. Those of us who have laid our dear ones in that lovely spot, with the beautiful Church Service, feel thankful for St. James the Less which will ever be an inspiration and cause of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Father Edward Ritchie was one of the finest men it was my pleasure to come in contact with. I think it was in the late nineties that myself and family came to St. James the Less from Old Christ Church where I had gone since I was old enough to walk. From the very first we were all very much impressed by his sincerity and earnestness and for the next 25 years we developed a real love for our new Rector. To know him was to like him and it was my proud boast that we never had any squabble but were all like a great big family.

I understand at one time he took a vacation trip to Bermuda. While sitting on the porch he suddenly thought some of the folks may get sick and need me and he came back at once on the same boat. He was so devoted to his people he could not bear to leave them. At another time on a cold and sleety evening while he was in his study, there came a knock on the door and his housekeeper said a lady wished to see him, and she was ushered in. It seems she had a lot of trouble, husband not working and no coal or food in the house. He thought a moment and then went over to an oil stove he had to take the chill off. He turned it off, and then giving her

some money he handed her the stove and sent her on her way rejoicing.

I cannot tell you of the hundreds of baskets of food he sent to poor families. He did not ask are they Catholic or Protestant, are they Jew or Gentile, or are they black or white. All he knew was they were in need. The years I spent with my family at St. James the Less were happy and contented ones, and I felt very much honored to call him friend. He was a true follower of Jesus Christ and truly lived the part. May God bless him and grant him Eternal rest and peace now and for evermore.

I have always been thankful to God for being a member of St. James the Less. Having been Baptized and Confirmed here and having the privilege of being taught the fundamentals of my religion by that wonderful priest, Father Edward Ritchie.

It is with real joy to know that so many of my friends not only those who are with us now, but also that many who are in the surrounding Churchyard may join in with us in our prayers and petitions which are like an endless chain which is never broken.

One of the greatest joys is to be able to come into Church any hour of the day and kneel before the altar. Here we come and offer our prayers to Him who we know is on the altar at all times. May this privilege be always extended to me throughout my life.

While at Camp in 1944 a few other boys and girls and myself had Catechism at Chapel during rest period. We learned about five questions and answers each day. When we came home I learned some more. Then I got confirmed on April 11, 1945.

When the Church of St. James the Less was completed my grandfather, the Rev. Charles S. Williams, D.D., an English Priest ordained by the Lord Bishop Tomlin of Lincoln in 1820, was among the first to select burial lots. Before going into the Ministry he had been an officer in the First Life Guards. All his life he bore traces of severe wounds which had left him all night among the dead and dying on the battlefield of Toulouse, at which time he resolved, if his life was spared, to devote the rest of his life to the ministry of God.

I am thankful for the weekday Communion Service and the family life at St. James the Less.

Loving Saint James the Less, I have enjoyed many happy services.

When I open the Church door I feel as though all my cares and troubles have vanished. So peaceful, so quiet. What a wonderful privilege to be allowed to come and worship.

The best part of St. James the Less is its workshop, basketball and Camp. In Shop you learn how to use your hands and the tools used for woodwork. You learn how to make and repair wooden toys and furniture.

In basketball you learn the art of sportsmanship and how to play a very interesting and exciting game. You learn to play with other boys the right way.

In Camp you have lots of fun hiking, swimming and working. We enjoy camplife because it's almost like home; playing with your friends; you learn different things as: hiking, swimming, songs and the meaning of Church in your life. You start the day off by going to early Church and then

breakfast. You enjoy this meal because you have the feeling of security and peacefulness in the woods. We appreciate the time the Church spends and the money also to keep this camp for us. I think the only way we can show this is by showing we enjoy this time at camp and going to Church and Sunday School every Sunday. At Sunday School you learn to read between the lines of the Collect, Epistle and Gospel of the day.

I will try and tell you a little about my life at Saint James the Less. My husband was Sexton for twenty-three years, he passed away there. We both got our spiritual training from the Reverend Robert Ritchie. He and Mrs. Ritchie always tried to make our lives happy while they lived. We were married by him. He baptized our children and prepared them for Confirmation. I can't begin to tell all the blessings I got from St. James the Less. I am still getting help and comfort from the clergy.

St. James the Less is very dear to me as all my dear ones rest there, my parents, brother, sister and sister-in-law.

Why I like Church is because of Camp, going up on the train, the ferry and coming home. I like the place where the boys sleep, especially below the window. And Chapel and the food we eat, because when I get home and get in fights I always win. I have to learn how to swim. This year I would like to be on the Maroon side. I like softball, basketball, volleyball, especially I like the hikes we go on, frog hikes, Mica mine hikes and especially the Mohawk hike.

I like Church because of Camp. The first year we were a little homesick, but the next three years we enjoyed it very much. I enjoyed swimming, going to town, scenery, Chapel,

the dining room and where we live, hikes when not too long and especially the moonlight hikes. I like to play bunco, camp fires and the interesting stories. I also like the trip up to Camp especially how we went the last time. I think it is a very nice vacation up there and a swell opportunity for those who go.

Well, we arrived at West Cornwall safe and sound, but everyone was pretty tired. We went to Camp and had a hearty meal. Later, when the dishes were done, we went to Chapel. After Chapel we went to town. On the road was the usual singing and happiness.

While at Camp we had a good time; we went on hikes and had entertainment every Friday night. Some of the hikes we went on were Mohawk, Dean's ravine, Green Meadows, and many others. The hike that most of the children liked was the one to Mohawk. It was a long, hard walk and a good climb but we got there and boy, did we have the time of our life. We picked berries and some of the brave men went to Look Out Point. We arrived at the Point and when we climbed the tower we saw a view never to be forgotten. When we got back to camp we had muffins and milk, and everyone was glad to get in bed.

To any boy or girl who wants to come up to Camp, take my advice and go, for you will have the time of your life.

Memories. Yes, memories of years past, still linger within our minds, when cherished moments pass before our eyes. One can recall the Fourth of July picnics, marching two by two, with a tow line as our middle guide, down Clearfield Street to Ridge Avenue, thence up Scotts' Lane to the Dobson Woods (now a housing project), headed by Rev. Robert Ritchie, ringing a bell as we marched along. On arriving at the woods, we were met by a Committee of the Men's Guild,

who had worked through the night erecting benches and preparing the lemonade and sandwiches. What a day was spent in the woods by both young and old.

Many will recall the Old Parish House where the Altar Boys gathered in the summer for their annual trip to Willow Grove and in the fall for the Oyster Supper, served by the Ladies' Aid Society. The famous Turkey Suppers, the annual Men's Guild feast, never to be forgotten by the Old Guard, a feast our Bishop never failed to attend. Here the Ladies' Aid put on their best in order to satisfy the inner man of one hundred and fifty to two hundred men. No family of the Parish went hungry on Thanksgiving Day, well can I recall the Men's Guild volunteering their services to deliver the food packed in baskets by the Ladies' Aid.

What a story we could write of the men and women, who helped make St. James the Less, but space does not permit. I cannot fail to mention the opening of the New Parish House, with the slogan, "Something Doing Every Night." A call went out for volunteers to look after the building every night. The Men's Guild responded and for a good many years three men looked after the Parish Building, opening and closing and doing odd repair jobs here and there. New buildings call for new innovations, and here the Men's Guild stepped in, purchasing baseball and basketball equipment, erecting a basketball court and by the loan of the ground adjoining the Parish House a baseball diamond was laid out. Chess and checkers for the old and a pool table for the young. And did we travel in those days? St. James the Less was known to every Parish in the diocese, and what a proud Rector was the late Rev. Edward Ritchie, when he would announce, "This is my Men's Club. I command them to do something and it is done." Memories. Yes, memories of years gone by.

I am thankful for many things since I have had St. James the Less for my Church. I have had a richer, fuller life, and

while many may be telling of the old times of St. James the Less, I would like to tell of something new that was brought to us in the Camp life. We look forward to going up there, and what a happy time we all have together, just one big family. The day is started off with all the children going to Chapel, and is ended the same way at eventide. I am sure we who have been to Camp, know that our Lord is brought close to us by all we learn, and we love the Church of St. James the Less for giving us this great opportunity of Camp Life.

There are so many lovely things connected with St. James the Less to be thankful for, such as: hearing the Church bells at noon, reminding us to say a prayer wherever we may be; the beautiful entrance to, and the neatness of the Churchyard; the way in which the children are taught and take part in their service on the altar; and the chimes when they did ring; for the inspiring rendition of the lovely story "Olivet to Calvary" sung by the members of St. James the Less Choir; the devotion to the sick of my family by the priests, who, in entering the home brought God in, to help and improve the health of not only the sick but all the members of the household; the memory of the lovely Christmas services and decorated Church; all these will stay with me a long time.

What I want to remember and be thankful for is that the Church of St. James the Less has always been a Church where one could come to worship our Lord leaving all worldly things on the outside. My life has grown stronger and my faith more secure at St. James. One outstanding instance in my mind is when I took care of the Altar and spent the largest part of an Easter Sunday around the Church. I was really happy. I am so thankful God has given us Godly priests to lead us into a better life and prepare us for a heavenly life to come.

"If any one would tell you the shortest way to all happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make a rule to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you."

WILLIAM LAW, A. D. 1761

A Prayer for the Church of St. James the Less

Almighty and Everlasting God, Who dost govern all things in heaven and in earth, mercifully hear the supplications of us Thy servants, and grant unto this Parish all things that are needful for its spiritual welfare; enlighten and guide its priests; strengthen and increase the faithful; visit and relieve the sick; turn and soften the wicked; rouse the careless; recover the fallen; restore the penitent; remove all hindrances to the advancement of Thy truth; bring all to be of one heart and mind within the fold of Thy Holy Church, to the honor and glory of Thy name, Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.